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# NEWS RELEASE

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SHERIFF-CORONER  
**DON BARNES**

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OC Sheriff PIO  
714-904-7042  
[PIO@OCsheriff.gov](mailto:PIO@OCsheriff.gov)

Tara Campbell, Chief of Staff  
Office of Chairman Donald P. Wagner  
657-266-4825  
[TaraCampbell@ocgov.com](mailto:TaraCampbell@ocgov.com)

## **Chairman Don Wagner allocates funding for enhanced drug prevention and enforcement efforts**

**SANTA ANA, Ca. (August 8, 2023):** – The Sheriff’s Department will enhance its substance use prevention program and narcotics enforcement efforts thanks to Chairman Donald P. Wagner’s additional funding approved at Tuesday’s Orange County Board of Supervisors meeting.

Chairman Wagner brought forward the item to allocate \$1.7 million to support the department’s work in confronting the fentanyl crisis in Orange County.

“Fentanyl is at a crisis point in this State. While Sacramento refuses to address the issue, I will continue to be proactive in the fight against fentanyl,” said Wagner. “This funding to educate our youth and prevent drugs from coming into our community will save lives.”

The funding will support an additional deputy for Above the Influence, a six-week program for fifth and sixth grade students that aims to equip youth with the tools they need to prevent substance experimentation and substance use disorders.

The OC Sheriff Community Engagement Team, which currently is comprised of two deputies and a sergeant, runs Above the Influence and other drug education and prevention events in the county.

Last year, 37 Orange County schools participated in Above the Influence and more than 3,000 students graduated the program. The Community Engagement Team also conducted fentanyl awareness assemblies and parent seminars, reaching more than 21,000 students and more than 1,200 parents.

Approximately \$1.3 million of the funding will provide a third deputy to teach Above the Influence and participate in additional drug prevention activities for the next five years.

“Education and prevention remain our greatest resources in protecting our children from substance experimentation and substance use disorders,” said Don Barnes, Orange County Sheriff-Coroner. “I am grateful for the opportunity this funding from Chairman Wagner provides to expand this important program and effectively reach more students. The work of the Community Engagement Team undoubtedly saves lives.”

The remaining funding – approximately \$400,000 – is earmarked for enhancements for the Highway Interdiction Team (HIT), which works to interrupt the trafficking of narcotics, firearms and other contraband into Orange County.

In FY ‘22-‘23 HIT deputies made 18 felony arrests, confiscated more than 182,000 fentanyl pills and recovered more than \$2.3 million in currency.



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The additional funding from Chairman Wagner will provide:

- An additional HIT vehicle and drug detection K-9.
- Equipment to more efficiently and effectively locate concealed narcotics, firearms and other contraband.
- TruNarc, which provides on-site analysis of narcotics and unknown substances.

“HIT, along with all of our OC Sheriff narcotics teams, are relentless in their pursuit of holding traffickers accountable and keeping drugs out of our communities,” Barnes said. “Fighting the narcotics epidemic takes a multi-faceted approach that includes enforcement, education and rehabilitative programs. I am extremely proud of the work we are doing on all fronts, and look forward to the impact we will see from the expansion of these essential teams.”

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